

Interview of James Ludwig and his wife, Patricia (Mochel) Ludwig in their home in Lemont

by Audra Adomenas

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During the course of two visits to their home in Lemont, Illinois in July of 2021, Lemont Public Library archivist Audra Adomenas interviewed Mr. Ludwig and his wife Patricia Mochel about the John J. Ludwig Film Collection that he donated to the Lemont Public Library. James Ludwig donated his father's film collection, along with photographs and documents, to the Lemont Public Library in 2021. Together, Audra and the Ludwigs watched the nine reels of 16 mm film on the Ludwigs' projector in their basement. During the course of the viewing, many additional details about the people in the films were shared. Included in this document are the many anecdotes, stories and memories that the Ludwigs shared about John J. Ludwig's life in Lemont, his friends, family, local Lemont businesses and local clubs and organizations.

In discussing the documents "Pedigree Chart" and "John Bernard Ludwig Descendants, both of series 3 in the finding aid for the John J. Ludwig Film Collection, the Ludwigs shared more about the family tree and the interconnections between the Ludwigs, a long-time local Lemont family, and other prominent local families in Lemont. Namely, Howard Ludwig was the first cousin of John J. Ludwig. John B. Ludwig, the father of John J. was a country doctor who was based in Lemont at 314 Illinois Street. Later, he moved to office space in the Budnik Building. Howard Ludwig has a son who is alive at the time of the interview. His name is Howard Ludwig. The former mayor of Tinley Park's wife, Emily Zabrocki, was a local history researcher who conducted research on the Ludwig family. Josephine (Zaveski) Ludwig's sister married into the Bush family (Buskiewicz). The Bushes used to own a whole block of property near the Singer - Warner area. Buskiewicz was a banker. Josephine's sister, Anna, married a Buskiewicz who later embezzled funds from the Lemont National Bank on Canal St.

John J. Ludwig was very active in the Lemont community. He was a Lion, and, in the 1950's, he was one of the original founders of Keepataw Days, along with his friends. They came up with an idea for a fundraiser, where men were sentenced "to jail" for an hour or two if you didn't grow a beard. This may have been an even more novel idea in the early 1950's, where a man was considered to be "unkempt" if he allowed himself to grow a beard. Most men during this time period in America were clean-shaven. He and his friends came up with the idea to celebrate Lemont's Native American heritage and the Keepataw Tribe. Friends from the Lemont Chamber of Commerce and the local Lemont taverns all participated in the fundraiser. To raise funds, a person had to "pay" to get out of jail.

Rollie Nelson, of Nelson's Feed, had a son, Terry, who drove a 1949 Mercury, souped up. He was known around town to enjoy a good time. Patricia (Mochel) Ludwig's father, Pat Mochel, was part owner of the Blesch & Welter Hardware store. He sold it in 1975 to Gee Lumber before they built the bridge at State street. The store was later featured in the movie "Straight Talk" with Dolly Parton. Upstairs, was Blesch & Welter Lumberman's Club, a local Lemont tavern. You needed a sponsor to be able to come in, and there was a doorbell to ring at the entry. Slot machines and gambling were available.

Featured in reel 1 are, in order: WPA workers working on the sidewalk in front of 314 Illinois Street, the Lemont Pants Factory, Jack Ludwig age 1 years, Pete Kluge's car (Pete Kluge was the owner of the Lemont Pants Factory, a longtime local Lemont business). Mr. Kluge employed mostly immigrant women at the Lemont Pants Factory. His car was always parked on the wrong side of the street, on the opposite side. Seated at the dinner table are: (left to right) Josephine Ludwig, Robert Greening, Alma Greening, Phyllis (John J. Ludwig's wife), and Jack Ludwig, age 1 years.

Featured in reel 2 are, in order: Christmas 1946, the two boys George and Tracy Walker. The Walker family friends of thmily were fae Ludwigs.' The Walker Family owned Illinois Pure Aluminum. The factory manufactured "Walker Ware." There is footage of the flood of 1947, between the Lemont Pants Factory and 314 Illinois (alley view). Joe Pogciak, the Lemont florist located on Main st., is

featured walking down the street after the footage of the Christmas party. Also featured are either George or Tracy Walker, holding an infant Walker baby. The flood is seen in front of Lemont Pants Factory, and the alley by 314 Illinois Street.

Featured in reel 3 is a former gas station that was turned into a private residence, and the sidewalk at 314 Illinois street down to Main street that is washed out. There is a view of shoveling on Main street, and of the railroad tracks and boys shoveling. On the other side, a car goes through Canal Street. Jack Ludwig is shoveling alone. There is a view of the back of a house, which is the Reed Family's home with its yard that has been destroyed, then put back together again.

Featured in reel 4 is water flowing down the Reed Family's home (backyard). A garbage can is seen floating down the alley towards the railroad track. The view is the backyard, facing the alley, towards the Lemont Pants Factory. Seen is the Strand Drugstore, in downtown Lemont. There was one location here, and one at Steven and Canal streets. Later, they moved to another location. Before it was Strand's Drugstore on Canal st., that location was Nelson's Feed. The area closest to that was made into a parking lot. The other part, in 2021, is now the Stone Quarry Restaurant.

Featured in reel 5 are cars in Lemont during the 1948 parade. Seen are the many local businesses that had floats in the parade. At this time, someone's personal car was typically chosen to be decorated as the car that would participate in the parade. Also seen are possibly the Lemont High School Band and the view, looking west on Illinois street. Blesch & Welter floats are seen, along with many other local businesses. The Uptown Motors gas station is in the background. Seen marching in the parade are the Cub Scouts, Reservists, Lemont Fire Department and a fire engine, Eli Lubick Excavating, R. Peterson Hardware, Wold's (Beverages) Company. Gilbert Wold was the president of the Lemont Chamber of Commerce in 1953. Young boys Jack Ludwig (age 8) and James (age 4) are standing in the forefront.

Featured in reel 6 is the "Recreation Bowl," which had a grandstand. It was nicknamed by locals as "the castle." Recreation Bowl may have been shaped naturally by land. The Lemont Little League used

to play there. In the view up the hill, Lemont Public High School can be seen. If you look to the south-east, St. Cyril's is seen. The hill up to St. Cyril's was the local kids' extreme toboggan run during the winters. John E. Ludwig, a cousin, is seen, as well as a stone staircase that was built out of stone from the Lemont quarries.

Featured in reel 7 are the Lemont Bowling Lanes. Paul Hills was one of the first managers of the Lemont Bowling League. The bar at the bowling alley was named the "Bowl In Ease" Room. The Ordmans, a local Lemont family, owned three grocery stores. There were two brothers, Ralph and Reed Ordman. Reed was married to Addie, who was the person who named the bowling alley bar the "Bowl In Ease" Room. The Lemont Bowling Alley was owned by a group of local families, not all of whose identities were known to the public at the time. The Ordman family had a known financial interest in the bowling alley. Later in the film, there is a Lemont Chamber of Commerce float and Tom Treadway's Horse Farm float. James Ludwig recalls seeing the car with elliptically mounted bouncing wheels in many local Lemont parades during that time period. Seen is Wally & Ed's Foodmart. Pete Kluge is seen with the Red Indian Headdress and feathers. There is a view of guys with beards (Keepataw Days traditional fundraiser). Paul Hill with glasses holding his infant son, who is either Paul Hill, Jr. or Eddie Hill. A view of Canal street is seen. The billiards halls and taverns are seen in the footage. At the time, that was considered to be a place of ill repute.